

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

USMISSION USNATO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 0892

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PARM, NATO, UR

SUBJECT: KHLESTOV ON MBFR

REF: MOSCOW 5703 (1974)

1. SUMMARY. KHLESTOV, CHIEF OF THE SOVIET MBFR DELEGATION, STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE FOR THE SOVIET UNION OF BUNDESWEHR REDUCTIONS DURING MY CALL ON HIM ON JANUARY 20, MUCH THE SAME AS HE HAD DONE IN A SIMILAR CALL IN APRIL OF LAST YEAR (REFTEL). HE ALSO EMPHASIZED THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION THE NEED FOR REDUCTION FROM THE OUTSET BY ALL DIRECT PARTICIPANTS. WHEN I
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REMINDING HIM THAT THE WARSAW PACT HAD ALREADY SEEMINGLY

AGREED TO INITIAL U.S.-SOVIET REDUCTIONS IN ITS OCTOBER 1974 PROPOSAL, HE ADMITTED THAT THE PACT, IN A SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE, HAD INDEED TAKEN OVER ASPECTS OF SOME NATO POSITIONS, INCLUDING THE SEPARATION OF NATIONAL AND INDIGENOUS REDUCTIONS AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE OCTOBER PROPOSAL. CONSTANTLY RETURNING TO THE BUNDESWEHR ISSUE, HE STRESSED THE SOVIET UNION STILL NOT ONLY DID NOT KNOW HOW MUCH THE WEST GERMAN ARMY WOULD REDUCE, BUT DID NOT EVEN KNOW WHEN IT WOULD REDUCE. HE NEVERTHELESS SPOKE IN GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC TERMS REGARDING THE NEGOTIATIONS, SAYING (AS HE DID LAST YEAR) THAT "WE ARE CONDEMNED TO SUCCEED." HE DENIED THAT THE LATEST WARSAW PACT PROPOSALS WERE AN ATTEMPT TO LIMIT AGREEMENT TO TOKEN REDUCTIONS ONLY, INSISTING THAT THE PACT IS STILL READY TO REDUCE TO THE 15 PER CENT IT ORIGINALLY PROPOSED. ON THE CONCEPT OF A COMMON CEILING, HE SAID WITH SOME DELIBERATION THAT THE SOVIET UNION DEFINITELY WANTS AN MBFR AGREEMENT, BUT THAT IT COULD NOT ACCEPT AN AGREEMENT WHICH IT CONSIDERED PUT IT AT A DISADVANTAGE. HE ARGUED AT SOME LENGTH AGAINST THE CONCEPT, BUT DID NOT AT ANY POINT REJECT IT OUTRIGHT. HE ALSO STRESSED THAT IN COMPARING THE STRENGTH OF THE TWO SIDES, THE "FIREPOWER" OF ALL TYPES OF UNITS MUST BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION. FINALLY, HE CALLED FOR U.S. PRESSURE ON ITS ALLIES. KHLESTOV SAID THAT HE WOULD BE LEAVING FOR VIENNA JANUARY 27. END SUMMARY.

2. IN REPLY TO MY REQUEST FOR HIS GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF HOW MATTERS STAND IN MBFR, KHLESTOV SAID THAT MOVEMENT CAN BE ACHIEVED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. HE QUICKLY ADDED THAT THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM WHICH MUST BE OVERCOME IS THE QUESTION OF THE BUNDESWEHR -- "ESPECIALLY THIS YEAR, THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WORLD WAR II." HE SAID THAT THE WEST GERMAN ARMY CONTINUES TO BE A VERY IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR IN SOVIET THINKING, AND THAT WITHOUT SATISFACTORY COMMITMENTS ON REDUCTION IN ITS STRENGTH, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE SOVIET DELEGATION TO "SELL" AN AGREEMENT TO ITS AUTHORITIES.

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3. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE FRG SHOULD ENGAGE IN REDUCTIONS FROM THE OUTSET, AS SHOULD ALL DIRECT PARTICIPANTS. I INTERRUPTED TO ASK IF THE WARSAW PACT HAD NOT ALREADY AGREED TO INITIAL REDUCTIONS BY NATIONAL FORCES, WITH REDUCTIONS BY OTHER STATES TO FOLLOW LATER. HE SAID THAT THAT APPROACH WAS NOT "OUR POSITION"; HE WENT ON TO EXPLAIN, HOWEVER, THAT IN

AN EFFORT TO REACH AN AGREEMENT, THE WARSAW PACT HAD "TAKEN ON" SEVERAL NATO POSITIONS AS COMPROMISE PROPOSALS. HE ENUMERATED THEM: AGREEMENT TO THE DIVISION OF FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE INTO TWO GROUPS, I.E., NATIONAL AND INDIGENOUS; AGREEMENT TO INITIAL REDUCTION IN NATIONAL FORCES, WITH INDIGENOUS FORCE REDUCTIONS TO FOLLOW; NON-PROPORTIONAL CUTS DURING THE FIRST PHASE; AND THE IDEA OF SEPARATE PHASES. HE ADDED THAT THE WP HAD NOT ACCEPTED THESE POSITIONS EXACTLY AS NATO HAD PROPOSED THEM, BUT CONTENTED THAT EVEN THEIR PARTIAL ACCEPTANCE WAS A MEANINGFUL CONCESSION.

4. I SAID THAT I HAD READ AMBASSADOR RESOR'S PLENARY ADDRESS OF DECEMBER 12, AND NOTED THAT HE HAD RAISED A "BASIC NEW ISSUE" -- WHETHER THE GOAL OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WAS TO CONTINUE TO BE SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTIONS, OR WHETHER WP SHOULD SETTLE AT LEAST FOR NOW FOR INTERIM MEASURES. I EMPHASIZED WE CONTINUE TO HOPE FOR THE FORMER KHLESTOV REPLIED, SPEAKING WITH EMBASSIES THAT THE LATEST WARSAW PACT PROPOSALS HAD NOT BEEN INTENDED AS ENDS IN THEMSELVES, FOR THE ORIGINAL WARSAW PACT PROPOSAL HAD NOT BEEN WITHDRAWN. THE LATTER WAS STILL ON THE TABLE AS AN EARNEST OF THE WILLINGNESS OF THE WP TO REDUCE AS MUCH AS THE 15-PLUS PER CENT SUGGESTED IN THE FIRST PROPOSAL.

5. KHLESTOV MADE A POINT OF EMPHASIZING THAT IN EVALUATING THE COMPARATIVE STRENGTH OF THE TWO SIDES, THE "FIREPOWER" OF ALL TYPES OF UNITS MUST BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION. HE REJECTED THE WESTERN CONCEPT OF REDUCTION OF GROUND FORCES ONLY AS DEVIATING FROM THIS PRINCIPLE AND THEREFORE BEING A POOR BASIS FOR

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COMPARISON. WHEN I MENTIONED THE WP PREPONDERANCE IN TANKS, HE BRUSHED THIS OFF BY NOTING THE GROWING EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTI-TANK WEAPONS, POINTING TO THE OCTOBER WAR AS PROOF OF THEIR EFFICACY.

6. I ASKED HIM WHAT THOUGHTS HE HAD ON THE QUESTION OF A COMMON CEILING. HE REPLIED THAT THE SOVIET UNION DEFINITELY WANTS AN AGREEMENT, AND THAT IT IS SEARCHING FOR A RESOLUTION TO THE DIFFERENCES IN POINTS OF VIEW WHICH ARE HOLDING BACK THE NEGOTIATIONS. IT COULD NOT ACCEPT, HOWEVER, AN AGREEMENT WHICH PUT IT AT A DISADVANTAGE. WARMING TO THE ARGUMENT, KHLESTOV SAID THAT THE WESTERN THESIS OF AN IMBALANCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE AT PRESENT IS AN "ILLOGICAL THESIS" IN ANY CASE. IF THERE REALLY WERE SUCH AN IMBALANCE, THE WEST WOULD

BE PUSHING TO REDUCE TO A COMMON CEILING AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, NOT DRAGGING THE REDUCTIONS OUT FOR YEARS. AT NO POINT IN HIS ARGUMENT, HOWEVER, DID HE REJECT THE CONCEPT OF A COMMON CEILING IN SO MANY WORDS.

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USDEL MBFR VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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7. RETURNING TO THE QUESTION OF THE FRG -- AS HE DID THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION -- HE AGAIN REFERRED TO IT AS "ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEMS" WHICH MBFR MUST OVERCOME. HE COMPLAINED THAT WHEN ASKED BY HIS GOVERNMENT HOW MUCH THE FRG WAS WILLING TO REDUCE, HE COULD ONLY ANSWER THAT THE WEST GERMANS HAD NOT EVEN AGREED ON WHEN THEY WOULD BEGIN REDUCTIONS, MUCH LESS ON HOW MUCH THEY WOULD REDUCE.

8. HE CONFIDED THAT PRESSURE BY THE U.. ON THE WESTERN EUROPEAN STATES TO REDUCE "WOULD HELP THE NEGOTIATIONS A GREAT DEAL." HE SAID THAT FROM HIS PERSONAL OBSERVATION HE COULD SEE THAT THE U.S PLAYS CONFIDENTIAL

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A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, AND WAS CONFIDENT THAT PRESSURE FROM US WOULD ACHIEVE SOMETHING.

9. AT ONE POINT HE REFERRED TO A STATEMENT IN AMBASSADOR RESOR'S DECEMBER 12 PLENARY STATEMENT WHICH ALLEGEDLY PROPOSED NON-INCREASE RESTRICTIONS ON UNITS EQUIPPED WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS. I INTERRUPTED HIM TO SAY THAT I DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD MADE SUCH A STATEMENT. HE THEN EXPLAINED THAT SINCE THE AMBASSADOR HAD SAID THAT THE NON-INCREASE PROPOSALS WERE TO INCLUDE ALL FORCES EXCLUDING THE NAVY, SUCH UNITS MUST SURELY BE INCLUDED.

10. KHESTOV'S REMARKS ON A DATA EXCHANGE FOLLOWED THE STANDARD SOVIET LINE: EXCHANGE OF DATA ONLY AFTER AGREEMENT ON THE PRINCIPLES OF REDUCTION.

11. KHESTOV SAID THAT HE WOULD BE LEAVING FOR VENNA JANUARY 27.

12. SITTING IN WITH KHESTOV ON THE MEETING WAS (FNU) IZVEKOV (PERHAPS IZVEKHOV), WHO LATER TOLD THE EMBOFF ACCOMPANYING ME THAT HE MAY BE JOINING THE SOVIET DELEGATION FOR THE FIFTH ROUND. IZVEKOV SAID THAT HE WORKS IN THE ADMINISTRATION FOR FOREIGN POLICY PLANNING IN MFA. HE MAY BE AN ASSISTANT OR A PROTEGE OF SMIRNOVSKY, WHO IS THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THAT DEPARTMENT, AND WHO WILL BE RETURNING TO VIENNA AS WELL. IZVEKOV SAID HE HAD SERVED ABROAD "IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES," THOUGH HE SAID THAT THE U.S. HAD NOT BEEN ONE OF THEM. HE IS APPROXIMATELY 40 AND IS PROBABLY OF FIRST SECRETARY RANK. WE WILL FORWARD ANY FURTHER INFORMATION WE DEVELOP ON HIM.
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